

Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Testimony on
S.B. 1195 An Act Concerning School Finance Reform

The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) which represents the superintendents of schools in CT and the members of their cabinets **OPPOSES** the enactment of S.B. 1195, AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL FINANCE REFORM. We take this position for the following reasons.

1. Governor Malloy has proposed the establishment of a commission that would be given the charge of recommending a reformation of public school financing in CT. Such a reformation is long overdue because the present system addresses equity poorly, does not address adequacy at all, imposes an undue financial burden on local school districts regarding the support for magnet and charter schools and does not establish a viable component for funding choice programs. CAPSS is pleased, therefore, that it is named as one of the organizations that would be represented on the Governor's commission.

CAPSS is also aware of the fact that school financing systems are complex entities that need to be the subject of careful deliberation and analysis before they are adopted. Failure to devote deliberation and analysis more often provides an opening for *The Law of Unintended Consequences* to become operational.

An example of this can be seen in the neighboring state of Rhode Island where a system similar to the one specified in S.B. 1195 was enacted. That system is not yet operational yet revisions are already being considered because various parties have identified consequences that apparently were not considered when the system was initially enacted.

The Governor's proposal allows for the deliberation and analysis that is required to reform the public education financing system appropriately and also provides for the involvement of recognized national experts in the process. It would be highly inappropriate, therefore, for the Legislature to pre-empt this process and enact any funding system funding proposal before the work of the Governor's Commission has even started.

2. The sections of S.B. 1195 that address the funding of magnet and charter schools would exacerbate instead of resolve the undue burdens that are already placed upon local school districts with respect to the funding of choice programs. Presently, local school districts have their entire ECS Grant reduced by the entire per student amount that was in effect two years ago for every local child who was enrolled in a state chartered school two years ago. This amount is much more than those districts save when those students leave the district. Also, the present arrangement for the funding of magnet schools requires local school districts to pay out much more than they save when students enroll in magnet schools.

What this does is reduce the amount per student that local districts have available to educate the children who remain in the local districts. The effect of this is that the

education of these children who are by far the vast majority of children served by public education in the state is diminished for the sake of providing a good educational program for the small minority of children who are enrolled in state chartered and magnet schools.

Instead of addressing this situation, S.B. 1195 makes it worse by requiring local districts to send to charter and magnet schools the difference between what the state provides them and the per pupil allocation that exists in the local district. In effect, then, S.B. 1195 would reduce that local expenditure so as to honor the choice being made by the relatively few parents who decide to enroll their children in magnet and charter schools and at the same time not honoring the choice of the vast majority of parents who decide to leave their children enrolled in the local school district.

CAPSS endorses parental choice as an important component of a high quality education system because choice is an effective strategy for engaging parents in a meaningful way in the education of their children. For choice to be effective, however, the funding system cannot support the choice made some parents at the expense of reducing support for the choice made by other parents.

For this reason, representatives of CAPSS along with representatives of CAFE, CCM and ConnCAN proposed to the Ad Hoc Funding Committee of the State Board of Education a design principle that called for scaling the money that would actually go from a local district to any choice program to what the local district would actually save when children leave the local district.

Surely, then, CT can do better than enacting the choice program funding mechanism that is contained in S.B. 1195.

I would be happy this matter with members of the Appropriations Committee.